

# Macular Degeneration: Complementary/Alternative Medicine

Progressive visual loss due to degeneration of the macula  
Eye exam may reveal spots of pigment near the macula and blurring of the macular borders

## QUICK REVIEW

- Degeneration of the macula is the leading cause of severe visual loss in the United States.

The major risk factors for macular degeneration are smoking, aging, atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), and high blood pressure.

- The treatment of the wet form of age related macular degeneration is immediate laser photocoagulation.

- The treatment goals in the dry form and prevention of the wet form involve

the use of antioxidants and natural substances that protect against free radical damage and improve blood and oxygen supply to the macula. Measures designed to reduce the risk of atherosclerosis are of great significance in the prevention (and treatment) of macular degeneration.

- A diet rich in fruits and vegetables is associated with a lowered risk for macular degeneration.

Antioxidant formulas have been shown to halt and even reverse macular degeneration.

## TREATMENT SUMMARY

As with most diseases, prevention and treatment at an early stage are the most effective approaches to ARMD. The treatment of the wet form of ARMD is clearly laser photocoagulation, applied as soon as possible. Since free-radical damage and lack of blood and oxygen supply to the macula appear to be the primary causes of macular degeneration, consumption of antioxidants and promotion of retinal blood flow are the keys to effective treatment.

Anyone with any vision loss should see a physician for complete evaluation, especially if the loss is progressing rapidly.

## Diet

Avoid fried and grilled foods and other sources of free radicals. Increase consumption of legumes (high in sulfur containing amino acids), yellow vegetables (carotenes), flavonoid-rich berries (blueberries, blackberries, cherries, etc.), and foods rich in vitamin E and vitamin C (fresh fruits and vegetables).

## Nutritional Supplements

- Vitamin C: 1 g three times per day
- Vitamin E: 600-800 IU per day
- Selenium: 400 mcg per day
- Beta-carotene (mixed carotenoids recommended): 50,000 IU per day
- Lutein: 5 mg per day

## Botanical Medicines

Choose one of the following:

- *Ginkgo biloba* extract (24% ginkgo flavonglycosides): 40-80 mg three times per day
- Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) extract (25% anthocyanidin content): 40-80 mg three times per day
- Grape seed extract (95% procyanidolic content): 150-300 mg per day